

Mr. FOX of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to address my colleagues on some issues that I think are very important to all Americans. First, I think we need to look at what has happened to try to help our senior citizens across the United States.

First, this 104th Congress, a very sensitive and caring, compassionate Congress, has already rolled back the Clinton tax on Social Security which had been established 2 years ago. We have also raised the earnings limits for seniors who are under 70 from \$11,280 to \$30,000 over the next 5 years. We have also passed legislation calling for a \$500 elder care tax credit, also a tax credit for the purchase of long-term care health insurance.

Now comes the issue of Medicare. We want to make sure in this Congress that we preserve, protect, and improve Medicare in this United States. We have heard from the trustees, a bipartisan group with three appointees from the Clinton administration, that in fact if we do nothing to help Medicare and let it stay the way it is, it will go bankrupt by the year 2002. A responsible House and Senate has to move forward to make sure we preserve, protect, and improve Medicare. Many of us are starting what we call Medicare preservation task forces. I just started one in my district in Montgomery County, PA. We have senior citizens and health care professionals and consumers of Medicare meeting for the purpose of discussing how we can make sure we in fact have Medicare become strong and remain vital.

The Republican proposal calls for the current figure of \$4,700 to grow to \$6,300 by the year 2002. That is a 45-percent increase. But we also need to make some other changes in the system to make sure it is in fact remaining strong. There is estimated as much as \$44 billion in waste, fraud, and abuse in the current Medicare and Medicaid systems. We need to make sure that the inspector general and other appropriate officials and, in Congress, oversight committees are making the changes so that that amount of waste is eliminated from Medicare and direct services do go to the people.

One of the other options we will be discussing is managed care and whether or not there is a more efficient and appropriate way to deliver the health care for those who may want that option while still retaining the fee-for-service option for health care for those on Medicare.

We need to have House and Senate Republicans and Democrats working together on a solution. We have seen that from the Clinton administration they have been AWOL, absent without leadership. There has been no proposal on how to save Medicare, when we know from the trustees and from the bipartisan task force that in fact Medicare needs to have appropriate changes made in the system to improve it, to

ensure that it is vital, and to make sure that it is financially stable.

I am looking forward to working across the aisle with fellow Members of the House to find the ways and means to control the costs, to eliminate bureaucracy, and to make sure we have more direct services to our senior citizens who deserve the best health care possible under our Medicare system and to make sure that in fact we work together for a solution before the year 2002 so that none of those senior citizens who want to have a Medicare Program that is there will miss the opportunity.

We will work together to help senior citizens to help improve Medicare, and to keep Social Security off the table because that is a program that has been vested by our seniors. It is a paid-in pension program. It is higher than an entitlement. It is a paid-in pension program that people deserve to have there for them, but we want to make sure that Medicare is strong and vital for them.

I look forward to working with Members of the House on both sides of the aisle.

#### RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. There being no further requests for morning business, pursuant to clause 12, rule I, the House will stand in recess until 12 noon.

Accordingly (at 11 o'clock and 10 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess until 12 noon.

□ 1200

#### AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore [Mr. GILMAN] at 12 noon.

#### PRAYER

The Reverend Randall C.K. Day, executive director, the Canterbury Cathedral Trust in America, Washington, DC, offered the following prayer:

Almighty God, You have given us this good land:

Make us alert to Your generosity and ready to do Your will.

Guard our unity as one people; build our acceptance of human diversity.

Bless our common life with unrelenting compassion, honorable work, sound learning, and stimulating arts.

Defend our freedoms. Save us from violence, discord, and every confusion; from egotism, arrogance, and every evil way.

Give wisdom, fairness, and integrity to those to whom we entrust the authority of government.

May there be peace with justice in our world, and may You be exalted among all nations.

In our prosperity, fill our hearts with thankfulness.

In the day of trouble may we always trust in You.

In Your mercy, O God, hear our prayer. Amend.

#### THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

#### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. OBEY] come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. OBEY led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

#### A TRIBUTE TO THE LATE HONORABLE LES ASPIN

(Mr. OBEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, as dean of the Wisconsin delegation, it is my sad duty to officially announce to the House something which most Members already know, that our friend and former colleague, Les Aspin, passed away at 7:55 Sunday night at Georgetown Hospital.

His official biography will note that he was born July 21, 1938. He received a bachelor's degree from Yale University, his master's in economics from Oxford University, and his Ph.D. in economics from MIT. He served as a staff assistant to U.S. Senator William Proxmire, and as a staff assistant to Walter Heller, the Chairman of the President's Council on Economic Advisers.

He served in the U.S. Army from 1966 to 1968. He taught economics at Marquette University before being elected to Congress in 1970. He served in Congress for 22 years, until 1992, when President Clinton appointed him as Secretary of Defense. When he resigned his congressional seat to become Secretary of Defense, he was, as Members know, the chairman of the Committee on Armed Services, and he was a darned good one. That is his official biography.

Mr. Speaker, let me say on a more informal note, as a friend, that Wisconsin has lost one of the most significant and effective human beings to ever serve our State, and the United States has lost one of the most decent and concerned citizens and leaders it has ever had.

In this time of cynicism about government and about politics and about politicians, I think it appropriate to note that Les Aspin literally worked his heart out to make this a better country and a safer world. He was totally dedicated, absolutely and totally